



DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

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BISHOP ALLIN, OTHERS RAISE EL SALVADOR PLIGHT

NEW YORK -- The first anniversary of the assassination of Salvadorean Archbishop Oscar Romero was marked with a call to prayer and mediation by Presiding Bishop John M. Allin of the Episcopal Church.

Romero was shot and killed while celebrating mass March 24, 1980 in San Salvador. His murder focussed international attention on the violence in El Salvador that has seen thousands slain. The subsequent murder of four American Roman Catholic women led the Carter administration to suspend weapons support for that nation -- a decision that the current administration has reversed.

In his letter, Allin noted that the Church had already acted to have that decision explored: "The Executive Council, at its recent meeting, responding to the call for prayerful solidarity and hearing the unsettling news of the importation of arms by foreign powers, passed a resolution expressing concern, calling for our increased prayers and seeking international mediation. I commend this resolution to you for your information and appropriate action."

Turning to the trials of Salvadoreans, Allin said: "As Holy Week approaches, and as the issues of suffering, betrayal and death are liturgically put in front of us, my hope is that Episcopalians will remember their brothers and sisters in El Salvador. As we pray for the people of El Salvador in their suffering, let us pray that we may be a part of their Easter, bringing resurrection and new life to a people and a nation.

"I leave with you the words of Archbishop Romero, which he preached the day before his murder: 'Lent is. . . a call to celebrate our redemption in that difficult complex of cross and victory. Our people are very qualified, all their surroundings preach to us of cross; but all who have Christian faith and hope know that behind this calvary of El Salvador is our Easter, our resurrection, and that is the hope of the Christian people. . . .'

"Pray, brothers and sisters, for peace in El Salvador. Work, brothers and sisters, for peace in the world."

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Allin's plea was shared by many Churchmen including the three Episcopal bishops in New Jersey who issued a joint letter to President Reagan expressing their alarm over the arms shipments.

In their letter, Bishop John S. Spong of Newark and Bishops Albert W. VanDuzer and G. P. Mellick Belshaw of New Jersey laid out the terms they felt the government should seek:

"We favor continued economic aid, but only as that government makes a commitment to protect the human rights of all people within its borders. We are convinced, on the basis of our contacts with El Salvador and the worldwide religious community, that the major issue in El Salvador is economic justice and political freedom for its citizens. We deplore any attempt to make the crisis in El Salvador a test case for our nation's relationships with the Soviet Union and Cuba.

"Furthermore, we urge a thorough, vigorous and open investigation into the murders of four religious workers and two land reform advisors from the United States. In a country where thousands of innocent citizens have already been killed, including Archbishop Romero, human rights workers, and liberal and moderate leaders, we ask you as the elected head of our nation to encourage the government of El Salvador to restrain the national security forces and the armies of the left and the right from the further shedding of blood."

In support of these pleas, the Church's Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief sent \$10,000 to aid the hard-pressed churches that have become centers for shelter and supplies for those people displaced in the civil war.

A recent visitor to El Salvador spoke of one center crowded with one thousand people, mostly widows and orphans, who depended entirely on Christian giving for their food and clothing.

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At the same time, we must not forget the fact that the United States is a country of immigrants, and that the vast majority of the population is made up of people who have come from other countries. It is therefore essential that we should have a policy of tolerance and understanding towards all racial and ethnic groups. We should not allow ourselves to be divided by racial prejudice, but rather should strive to create a united front against all forms of discrimination and oppression. This is the only way in which we can build a better and more just society for all.

In their letter, Bishop John B. Lloyd of Newark and Bishop Albert W. Van Dusen of New Jersey said that the Government should not attempt to restrict the rights of any group of people. They stated that the Government should instead concentrate on creating a more equitable and just society. They also called for the Government to support the efforts of the various civil rights organizations and to ensure that all citizens have equal access to the same opportunities and resources.

We must also remember that the United States is a country of laws, and that all citizens are expected to abide by the law. It is therefore essential that we should have a strong and effective legal system that can enforce the law and protect the rights of all citizens. This is the only way in which we can ensure that the United States remains a country of freedom and justice for all.

Furthermore, we must not forget that the United States is a country of diversity, and that we should celebrate our differences rather than trying to erase them. We should recognize that each of us brings something unique to the table, and that it is this diversity that makes the United States a great and powerful country. We should therefore strive to create a society in which all of our differences are valued and respected, and in which we can all live together in harmony and peace.

In support of these goals, the Church's Executive Bishop, a Trust for World Relief, and \$10,000 to aid the hard-pressed churches and have various projects for shelter and supplies for those people displaced in the civil war.

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